

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SPACE

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Science, Technology, and Space of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation be authorized to meet on Tuesday, June 29, 1999, at 2:30 P.M. on NOAA, U.S. Fire Administration, and Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program reauthorization.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO RABBI MOSHE SHERER

• Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, it is a privilege to join in this tribute to Rabbi Moshe Sherer. To all of us who knew him and worked with him, Rabbi Sherer was a great friend, a great leader, and a great champion of democracy and freedom.

Rabbi Sherer was an inspiration to all of us, especially in his work on immigration and religious freedom. He worked skillfully and tirelessly to free prisoners of conscience in the former Soviet Union, to reunite divided families, and to protect freedom of religion across the globe.

Even in the darkest hours of communism, Rabbi Sherer was an eloquent advocate for the right of the oppressed to leave the Soviet Union. He had an enduring belief that the freedom to emigrate to escape persecution is one of the most basic and fundamental human rights.

As the President of Agudath Israel of America for over three decades, Rabbi Sherer was instrumental in developing that organization into a powerful force for justice in our nation and across the world. He inspired us all with his generous spirit of tolerance, his extraordinary knowledge and understanding, and his deep commitment to human rights and religious freedom.

We are fortunate to have worked with Rabbi Sherer, and we mourn his loss. His brilliant legacy will continue to be an inspiration for future generations. We miss his leadership and we miss his friendship. •

JUVENILE CRIME IN AMERICA

• Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I rise today to express my support for the recent passage by the Senate of S. 254, the "Violent and Repeat Offender Accountability and Rehabilitation Act of 1999."

One of the most complex issues facing our society is how communities confront the troubling trends in violent crime committed by young people. In particular, the recent tragedy in Littleton, Colorado underscores that all elements of our society, including parents, faith-based organizations, local officials, educators, students, and law enforcement officials should be encouraged to work together to develop innovative and effective solutions to

reducing and preventing violent acts committed by our nation's youth.

In 1997, young people under the age of eighteen represented 17 percent of all violent arrests; 50 percent of all arson arrests; 37 percent of burglary arrests; and 14 percent of murder arrests. Overall in 1997, law enforcement agencies made approximately 2.8 million arrests of persons under the age of eighteen. These sobering statistics indicate the need to combat youth violence in America to ensure that the young offenders of today do not become the career criminals of tomorrow.

For these reasons, I am pleased to have voted for passage of S. 254, the "Violent and Repeat Juvenile Offender Accountability and Rehabilitation Act." I believe that many of the provisions within this legislation will hold violent juvenile offenders accountable for their actions and also integrate many young offenders back into their communities. We should all recognize that federal legislation is not a "silver bullet" solution to the problem of youth violence, and that our response to this epidemic is only one aspect of nationwide efforts to reduce and prevent violent juvenile crime.

Among its most significant provisions, this bipartisan legislation will provide assistance to Minnesota and other states to help develop local programs that hold young criminal offenders accountable for their actions, including such reforms as drug testing offenders upon arrest; implementing graduated sanction programs for repeat offenders; and building detention facilities for juvenile offenders. Equally important, states will also be empowered to prevent juvenile delinquency through initiatives such as one-on-one mentoring programs aimed toward at-risk juveniles and providing treatment for juveniles who suffer from substance abuse.

Mr. President, this measure also addresses an area of increasing concern to communities in my home state of Minnesota—gang violence. Today, there are more than 12,000 gang members in Minnesota, the nation's tenth-highest level of gang participation.

Throughout Minnesota, many communities have developed programs to stop the spread of gang activity, including the "South Metro Gang and Youth Violence Project" sponsored by Carver, Dakota and Scott counties. Among its achievements, this project has developed a computerized database to identify gang members, established a telephone hotline for graffiti removal, and formed the "South Metro Gang Task Force," through which law enforcement agencies meet monthly to share information regarding gang activity in their jurisdictions. Through education, training and other community initiatives, this program has begun to tackle the threat of gang and youth violence.

In my view, the federal government can supplement local anti-gang initiatives by vigorously enforcing federal laws designed to combat interstate gang crime. The anti-gang provisions

within S. 254 will also help to deter gang involvement by imposing stiff penalties on anyone who recruits a minor to become a member of a criminal street gang, or who uses a minor to distribute illegal drugs or participate in crimes of violence—common activities of gangs. By imposing enhanced penalties on those who wear body armor during crimes and prohibiting violent felons from owning body armor, we will also help to protect the lives of law enforcement officers who put their lives on the line each day protecting our communities from the threat of gang violence.

As someone who has always supported the important role of local communities in developing anti-crime strategies, I am pleased that the Senate modified this legislation to encourage the active role of State Advisory Groups (SAGs) as part of the juvenile justice system. I am hopeful that the conference report to this legislation will preserve the same level of responsibility for SAGs as provided under current law.

In my home state, the Minnesota Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (JJAC) is composed of twenty-two individuals appointed by the Governor, including local prosecutors, students, police chiefs, judges, and state agency personnel, representative of communities throughout Minnesota. In 1998, JJAC awarded more than \$1 million in federal funds to community-based organizations, schools, Indian reservations, and local law enforcement agencies to help develop effective and innovative juvenile offender programs. Statewide, more than 40,000 youth and their families were served by local programs identified and evaluated by JJAC last year. I ask that a list of the Minnesota Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee membership and a letter to me from the JJAC Vice-Chair be included as part of the RECORD following my remarks.

Mr. President, over the last several months, I have given careful thought to the aspects of our society that may contribute to incidents of juvenile crime, including the influence of the entertainment industry upon young people. My concerns are underscored by a recent e-mail I received from Andrew Backenstross, a young Minnesotan and Boy Scout who is working on his Citizenship in the Nation merit badge in the community of White Bear Lake.

Andrew wrote, "All my teachers say that school should be a safe place to go and study. But Colorado and other places show us how exposed we are and that it could happen to us. Public schools need to be able to discipline or remove anyone who is not a threat or will not meet standards. Metal detectors, searches and police walking the halls is not the answer. That was not needed when my Dad went to school. People thought differently. We have to ask, what has changed? Maybe we are being conditioned for violence."